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ABSTRACT

This study focuses upon the childhood and adolescent career choices of college freshman women. Subjects were 1188 women entering the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee as freshmen. These women were asked to complete the "Life Planning Questionnaire for Women," and to check those occupations, from a list of 135 from the Strong Vocational Interest Battery, which they had ever considered entering, and to list the age when each occupation was considered. Results showed that early vocational considerations of college freshmen tend to be few and general. In terms of overall popularity, the Medical, Social Service, and Verbal fields are considered by most women with Business and Clerical-Secretarial occupations considered by the least. The findings suggest that women do not make many or varied early choices, and that their later choices, although more varied, may be restricted to typical women's fields. (KJ)

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THE CHILDHOOD & ADOLESCENT CAREER PLANS OF COLLEGE WOMEN[1]

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Most theories of vocational choice have been developed out of a desire to understand how men choose their lifework. Two recent developments make it necessary to expand theories of vocational choice to include women. The first is the increasing proportion of women, especially mature women, who do work and the increasing proportion of jobs held by them. (U.S. Department of Labor, 1966). The second is the finding that contrary to time honored opinion (Strong, 1943), women in occupations from Sewing Machine Operator to Social Worker do have well defined sets of interests which can be measured using the revised SVIB for women (Campbell & Harmon, 1968, Campbell, 1970). Since women do work and choose their jobs purposefully, counselors can counsel them more effectively if they have some understanding of how their interests develop.

This paper, unfortunately, does not present a theory of vocational development or choice for women. Theory can be no more than speculation unless it develops after a long look at the way the world is. This study was an attempt to look at the childhood & adolescent career choices of college women in a normative manner. The purpose was to provide information for counselors and clues for those who are seeking a theory of vocational development in women.

Research in the vocational development of women has traditionally not gone much beyond the career or noncareer motivations of women (Matthews & Tiedeman, 1964; Tyler, 1964). Ginzberg (1951) is one of the few people who asked women specifically about their

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past vocational plans but he used an N of 10 and devoted most of his attention to the type of choices reported rather than the choices themselves. This study focuses upon the occupations previously considered by a large number of college freshman women.

Procedure

During the summer of 1968, all freshman women who participated in the pre-enrollment testing program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee were asked to complete the "Life Planning Questionnaire for Women." Eighty % of all freshman women (1188) did so. After completing the usual background questions, each woman was asked to read a list of 135 names of occupations, checking those she had ever considered entering and recording her age when she first considered it, her age when she last considered it and the reason she stopped considering an occupation.

The occupations listed were simply the 128 titles in Part I of the SVIB for women (Form T398) with the Title "Teacher - High School" expanded into various types and Mathematician, Occupational Therapist, and Physical Therapist added.

One of the problems in using a retrospective approach is that women may not recall the past accurately. The results of a more correct longitudinal approach however, may well be only history by the time they are available. In this case, using the retrospective approach meant that the results could only be considered to be hazy approximations of reality. The number of subjects available seemed adequate to provide reliable indications of trends.

Some of the trends investigated included: 1) the overall popularity of various occupational choices, 2) the median age at which each occupation was first considered, 3) the persistence of various occupational choices and 4) the reasons specific occupations

were dropped from consideration. In addition, the past choices of women who are currently planning to become either social workers or medical technologists were studied more intensively.

Subjects

The 1188 women were all entering University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee as freshman. The age of the respondents ranged from 16 - 44, with a mean of 17.7 years. Only 2% of the group were over 20. Eighty three % of the women were from the Milwaukee metropolitan area.

The median educational attainment of both the mothers and fathers of the subjects was high school graduation although the fathers more often than the mothers had some education beyond high school. The fathers were more likely to be employed in the skilled trades (28%) or semi and unskilled work (18%) than in the professions (12%) or management (13%). Only 31% of the mothers had never been employed during the daughter's lifetime. The mothers were more likely to have held clerical (23%) or service (15%) jobs than professional jobs (7%). Over half the freshman women whose mothers had been employed perceived their mothers' main motivation to be financial, and their fathers' attitude toward their mother's work to be tolerant as opposed to enthusiastic or grudging.

The primary educational goal of the freshman women was to obtain a Bachelor's degree although 35% were planning to take advanced degrees. Most of them planned to get their degrees in Education (23%) or Liberal Arts (35%). Very few of them expected to get degrees in Business Administration (3%) or Engineering (less than 1%).

While the subjects as a group were probably more like the

average woman in socioeconomic status than freshman on many university campuses, it is important to note that they were college bound and that they did come from a single geographical area.

Results

The number of occupations considered ranged from 1 to 90, with a mean of 16. However, the modal number was 12 and the middle 50% of the women considered 11 - 30 occupations.

Table 1 shows the percentage of the women who ever considered each occupation. The most popular occupation is Housewife. It may be even more popular than it appears here (51%) because many women who do not consider it an "occupation" probably did not check it.

Only 45 (33%) of the occupational titles had been considered by more than 10% of these women. The job titles were arbitrarily grouped into occupational families which resemble the groups of occupational scales on the women's SVIB. Then the percentage of occupations in each family which had been considered by more than 10% of the freshman women was computed. Table 2 shows that Medical Service occupations were most often considered by more than 10% of the respondents, with Social Service and Verbal occupations also often considered. Business and Clerical occupations were seldom considered by more than 10% of the respondents. Both the occupational groupings and the 10% cutoff point are arbitrary but Table 2 does present a meaningful way of looking at the information in Table 1.

The median age of the women who considered each occupation at the time when they first considered it was calculated as an indicator of the order in which occupations were considered. The results are in Table 3. Median age was used rather than mean age because

ages 6-9 and 10-12 were tabulated as units. Table 3 does not include occupations considered by less than five % of the women because the number involved (less than 60) didn't seem large enough to provide a reliable estimate of median age.

The most popular occupations from Table 1 tend to have been considered earliest. Occupations considered by only 5-8% of the women tend to have been considered later. Overall, a few occupations were considered by relatively large proportions of the group between ages 6-12 and more occupations were considered, each by a relatively small proportion of the group, between ages 13-17.

The occupations considered by older girls seem to be more specific and sophisticated. For instance, Nurse, Physician, and Veterinarian, were first considered at a median age between 10-12. Biologist, Medical Technologist, Chemist, Physical Therapist, Nurses' Aid, and Scientific Researcher were first considered at a median age of 15.

An analysis of the median age at which girls stopped considering an occupation provided little insight because most of the median ages were 16 or 17. Only Actress, Farmer, and Policewoman were given up at a median age of 13 and Veterinarian & Inventor at age 14.

It is also important to note that the proportions of women still considering each occupation varies. The respondents were presented with a list of possible reasons for ceasing to consider an occupation. They were: A) I realized that I do not have the necessary talents or abilities. B) When I found out what people in the occupation actually do I lost interest. C) The training for this occupation is too long or difficult. D) I did not wish to

undertake the training for this occupation because it is not offered in a college or university. E) My parents or other people who are important to me did not seem to approve the occupation wholeheartedly. F) I discovered that most people do not place a very high value on this type of work. G) The way of life associated with this occupation no longer appeals to me. H) I found another occupation I liked better although I believe this occupation would be a good one for me, too. I) This occupation is still one which I may decide to enter.

The modal response for 110 of the 135 occupations (81%) was I, "This occupation is still one which I may decide to enter." For 58 of those 110 occupations the next most popular response was H, "I found another occupation I liked better although I believe this occupation would be a good one for me, too."

Table 4 shows the approximate proportion of women who ever considered an occupation that are still considering it. Again occupations which had ever been considered by 5% or less of the women were omitted. Housewife, the most popular and earliest choice is also the most persistent. However, other popular choices such as, Actress, Beautician, and Fashion Model are among the least persistent choices. Educational and social service choices emerge as the most persistent. While the median age at which an occupation was first considered probably does have some effect on persistence measured at age 17, it does not account for all the variance in persistence. Note that the occupations chosen at a median age of 16 from Table 3 are scattered from the 30 to 70% levels in Table 4. It appears that occupations which do not require college training, which require talent or great beauty, or which require long training are among the least persistent, although some occupations of these types occur in

the 30-49% range as well as below 30%.

Table 5 shows the modal reasons for ceasing to consider an occupation. Since the modal response for most occupations was that it is still being considered, there are few entries in Table 5. Note that some of the reasons i.e., the ones related to actual job duties, level of training required, parental approval, and status were not used enough to be the modal response for ceasing to consider any occupation. The reasons which were used often seem quite appropriate to the occupations for which they were used.

The only choices made between ages 6 and 12 which persisted (that is, continued to be considered by a majority of women) were Housewife, Nurse, & Missionary. Choices made at this age which did not persist included Actress, Artist, and Musician, which lends some credence to Ginzberg's contention that choices made before age 11 are phantasy choices, in the sense that the child believes he can do anything and does not know how to evaluate his own choices. Only those choices which stand the tests of interests, capacities, and values persist (Ginzberg, 1958).

Each woman had recorded her current occupational choice. Two groups of women, those who had chosen Social Work (N=53) and Medical Technology (N=30), were selected for further study to determine whether they had similar or different histories of occupational choices.

The number of choices for the Social Work sample was 13.6 with a range from 3-39. For the Medical Technology sample the mean number of Choices was 11.8, with a range from 2-31.

Table 6 shows the occupations considered by the Social Work & Medical Technology group in order of popularity with the median age at which group members first considered it. For contrast, the percen-

ages of the total group of freshman women choosing each occupation and their median age at first considering it are presented. Both the Social Work & Medical Technology groups chose their own occupational title more often than Housewife. The fact that the response to the occupational checklist was not perfect is highlighted by the fact that 21% of those who listed their current occupational choice as Social Work did not check it and 30% of those who listed Medical Technology as their current choice did not check it. One can only conclude that a check means the occupation was considered but the lack of a check doesn't mean the opposite. Hopefully such errors are equal for all the titles on the list and not selective. If one can assume that, then one can trust the ordering of occupations but not the levels indicated by the data.

Fourteen occupational names appear on both lists, but the Social Work list is more oriented toward verbal, aesthetic, teaching, and fashion occupations than the Medical Technology list which is oriented towards science, math, and medical service. The Social Work list seems more like the list for all freshman women. The comparison percentages from the total freshman group progress rather neatly in a descending order next to the Social Work group percentages but do not do so next to the Medical Technologist group percentages.

The median ages at which both groups first made various choices were strikingly similar to the ages at which women in the whole freshman group made those choices despite the fact that they are based on very small Ns. This suggests that relevant choices are not made earlier for women who choose Social Work or Medical Technology than for the average woman. Instead, the choices for both groups seem to diverge in the early teenage years into paths which are typical of women who choose either Social Work or Medical Technology.

The comparison of the two groups suggests that they do indeed have different histories of vocational choices.

Conclusions

The early vocational considerations of college freshmen tend to be few and general. Of course, the checklist left out some fantasy choices which might well have occurred during the 6-9 year age period. A place to fill in "other" occupations considered was used by only 3% of the women but their entries did include things like "Cowgirl" & "Military Officer."

Because early choices were somewhat constricted in range, occupations like Actress, Artist, & Nurse which were chosen early were quite popular. A broader range of occupations was chosen later with each occupation being less popular. However, since there was no restriction on the number of occupations a girl could check, we might conclude that while older girls look at the world of work more broadly,they look at themselves more narrowly.

In terms of overall popularity the Medical, Social Service, and Verbal fields are considered by the most women with Business and Clerical-Secretarial occupations considered by the least. The whole business world has been rejected by this group of college freshman. Jobs at the higher levels of responsibility in business may well have been rejected on the basis of cultural bias against women in positions of authority. Jobs at lower levels of the business world have probably been rejected as being for noncollege girls only. While it seems good for women to begin to define themselves in terms of their interests and desired life style, it is not good if they rule out possibilities on the basis of social or family pressure.

The popularity and persistence of the choice "Housewife" suggests that marriage as an institution is not likely to go out of style with this age group despite medical, legal, and ecological developments which make it possible for the single girl to have ~~her freedom and a good time too.~~ the best of both worlds.

The most persistent choices for women in this group (after Housewife) tend to be in educational & social service occupations. The least persistent choices involve unusual talent, long periods of training, or short noncollege training courses. Of course, the data collected here on persistence does not reflect the total picture because the median age of the respondents was only 17. Future studies might show that many of the choices which appear persistent here do not persist past age 20 or 25.

Taken together these findings suggest that women do not make many or varied early choices, that their later choices although more varied may be restricted largely to typical women's fields, and that women's current vocational choices give some clues to their earlier patterns of vocational thinking. This latter finding may mean that women today do not choose careers as randomly as was previously thought and that expressed choices do follow a history of related interests. Unfortunately, this study does not even suggest how divergent patterns of vocational interests develop.

The implications for counseling seem to be twofold. First, if the counselor is indeed an agent of cultural change, he should do everything he can to encourage women to consider many types of occupational choices which cut across the boundaries of cultural and sexual stereotypes. Secondly, the counselor dealing with an adolescent girl will do well to listen to the unusual occupations she is con-

sidering. They may well provide clues to her future vocational behavior. Looking at Table 6 suggests that it would be wise to pay attention to a 15 year old girl who says she is considering X-ray technology, scientific research, and mathematics which are relatively unpopular choices except for women entering medical technology (and perhaps other scientific occupations). It would be unwise to encourage her to enroll in Elementary Education because it's "a good field for women" without further exploration of scientific fields.

Again, it must be stressed that the data compiled here is based on the recollections of college freshman from one locality. It should be accepted only tentatively, as suggestive of trends, until it is further validated.

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Footnotes

1. A paper presented at the national convention of the American Personnel and Guidance Association in New Orleans, Louisiana, on March 24, 1970.

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Table 1

Popularity of Various Occupations
by Percentages of 1188 Freshman Women
Who Have Ever Considered Them

%	Occupations
51	Housewife
44	Actress
36	Teacher-Elementary
33	Artist/Social Worker
31	Interior Decorator
28	Nurse
27	Fashion Model/Stewardess/Teacher-Kindergarten
26	Author-Novel/Beautician
25	Teacher/Eng
22	Psychologist
20	Private Secretary/Psychiatrist
19	Author-Children's/Foreign Correspondent
18	Dental Assistant/Interpreter
17	Biologist/Missionary/Musician
16	Costume Designer/Teacher-Language
14	Architect/Athletic Director/Medical Technologist/Poet
13	Advertiser/Chemist/Librarian/Pro Dancer
12	College Prof/Lawyer-Crim/Physical Therapist/Physician/Secret Service/ Teacher-Art/Teacher-Social Studies
11	Artists Model/Bacteriologist/Dressmaker/Occupational Therapist/Veterinarian
10	Dramatist/Nurses' Aid/Magazine Writer
9	Dietitian/Florist/Mathematician/Receptionist/Teacher-Music/Typist
8	Buyer/Cartoonist/City-State Employee/Editor/Composer/Scientific Researcher/ Teacher-Dance/Teacher-Math
7	Pilot/Comptometer Opr/Manager-Children's Nursery/Hostess/Illustrator/ Playground Director/Reporter-Gen'l/Sculptress/X-ray Tech
6	Educational Director/Judge/Church Worker/Pharmacist/Surgeon/Teacher-Science Waitress
5	Bank Teller/Bookkeeper/Bank Cashier/Cook/Farmer/Supermarket Check-out Clerk/ Manager-Women's Style Shop/Policewoman/Office Clerk/Politician/Radio-TV Singer/Reporter-Women's Pages/Stenographer/Teacher-Domestic Science
4	Housekeeper/Lawyer-Corporation/Court-Stenographer/News Photographer/ Portrait Photographer/Radio Announcer/Teacher-Commercial/Travel Bureau Manager/ Vocational Counselor
3	Income Tax Accountant/Governor/Inventor/Opera Singer/School Principal/Other
2	Dean of Women/Dentist/Employment Mgr/Engineer/Hospital Records Clerk/ Landscape Gardener/Museum Director/Probation Officer/Retailer/Weather Forecaster
1	Caterer/Author-Technical/Draftsman/Electronics Technician/Hotel Manager/ Life Insurance Saleswoman/Golf Pro/Office Manager/Railroad Reservationist/ Radio Program Director/Real Estate Sales/Sales Mgr/Scenario Writer/Scientific Illustrator/Speciality Sales/Statistician/Childrens' Clothes Designer
0	Supervisor-Telephone Office

Table 2

Percentages of Occupations in Various Occupational Families
Considered by More than 10% of
1188 Freshman Women

Occupational Family	N Occupations in Family	% of Occupations in Family Chosen by >10%
Performing	12	42
Artistic	13	38
Verbal	19	53
Social Service	16	56
Math-Science	17	35
Business	16	0
Domestic	6	17
Clerical-Secretarial	11	9
Medical Service	6	83
Non-professional	12	42

Table 3

Median Ages When Various Occupations
Were First Considered*

Age	Occupations
6-9	Housewife/Actress/(1)*
10-12	Artist/Nurse/Missionary/Musician/Pro Dancer/Physician/Veterinarian/Composer/(6)*
13	Teacher-Elem/Beautician/Cartoonist/Teacher-Dance/(1)*
14	Fashion Model/Stewardess/Teacher-Kind/Author-Novel/Private Secretary/Author-Children's/ Architect/Athletic Director/Poet/Librarian/Lawyer-Crim/Secret Service/Dressmaker/Dramatist/ Mathematician/Pilot/Teacher-Music/Manager-Children's Nursery/Illustrator/Playground Director/ Surgeon/(4)*
15	Social Worker/Interior Decorator/Teacher-English/Psychiatrist/Foreign Correspondent/Dental Assistant/ Interpreter/Biologist/Costume Designer/Teacher-Language/Medical Technologist/Chemist/Physical Therapist/Teacher-Art/Artists' Model/Magazine Writer/Nurses' Aid/Dietitian/Florist/Scientific Researcher/Teacher-Math/Hostess/Reporter-Gen'l/Sculptress/Teacher-Science/ (20)*
16	Psychologist/Advertiser/College Professor/Teacher-Social Studies/Bacteriologist/Occupational Therapist/ Receptionist/Typist/Buyer/City-State Employee/Editor/Comptometer Operator/X-ray Technician/ Educational Director/Judge/Pharmacist/Waitress/(20)*
17	(4)*

*Occupations considered by 5% or less of the total group are not listed. The number in parenthesis indicates the number of such occupations at each age level. Occupations listed are in order of popularity within ages.

Table 4

Persistence of Choices
Approximate Percentages of Women Who
Ever Considered an Occupation That are
Still Considering It*

Approximate % of Women Still Considering	Occupations
80-89	Housewife
70-79	Educational Director/(3)*
60-69	Teacher-Elem/Teacher-Kind/College Prof/Teacher-Social Studies/Buyer/Scientific Researcher/ Church Worker/(8)*
50-59	Social Worker/Teacher-English/Psychologist/Teacher-Language/Teacher-Art/City-State Employee/Editor/Teacher-Math/(9)*
40-49	Interior Decorator/Author-Novel/Author-Childrens'/Foreign Correspondent/Biologist/Medical Technologist/Poet/Advertiser/Chemist/Bacteriologist/Occupational Therapist/Dramatist/ Receptionist/Comptometer Operator/Manager-Nursery/Hostess/Illustrator/Playground Director/ Reporter-General/Sculptress/Judge/(8)*
30-39	Artist/Nurse/Stewardess/Psychiatrist/Interpreter/Costume Designer/Athletic Director/ Librarian/Physical Therapist/Secret Servicewoman/Dressmaker/Florist/Mathematician/ Teacher-Music/Typist/Cartoonist/Composer/Teacher-Dance/Pilot/X-ray Technician/Pharmacist/(15)*
20-29	Fashion Model/Missionary/Musician/Architect/Professional Dancer/Lawyer-Crim/Artists Model/ Nurses' Aid/Dietitian/(16)*
10-19	Actress/Beautician/Private Secretary/Dental Assistant/Physician/Veterinarian/Surgeon/(4)*

*Occupations which were ever considered by 5% or less of the total group are not listed. The number in parenthesis indicates the number of such occupations at each percentage level. Occupations listed are in order of popularity.

Table 5

Modal Reason for Giving Up an Occupation
Previously Considered

Reason	Occupation
Lack of talent or ability	Actress/Artist/Fashion Model/Musician/Architect/Pro Dancer/Physician/ Artists' Model/Music Composer/Teacher-Math/Sculptress/Surgeon/Radio-TV Singer/ (4)*
Training too long or difficult	Veterinarian/Lawyer-Crim/ (1)*
Way of life undesirable	Beautician/Pilot/Waitress/ Policewoman/ (2)*
Like another occupation better	Dental Assistant/Language Teacher/Athletic Director/Teacher-Science/Office Clerk/ (4)*

*Occupations considered by 5% or less of the total group are not listed. The number in parenthesis indicates the number of such occupations for each reason. Occupations listed are in order of popularity.

Table 6

Occupations Ever Considered by More Than 15%
of Those Now Choosing Social Work or Medical Technology
with Median Age Each Was First Considered

Occupations Chosen SW Group	% SW Group (N=53)	Median Age SW Group	% Total Group (N=1188)	Median Age Total Group
Social Worker°	79*	15	33	15
Housewife°	58	10	51	6- 9
Actress°	45	8	44	6- 9
Psychologist	40*	16	22	16
Author-Novel	38*	13	26	14
Teacher-Elem°	34	14	36	13
Interior Dec°	34	15	31	15
Stewardess°	32	13	27	14
Psychiatrist°	30	15	20	15
Artist°	30	10	33	10-12
Nurse°	28	8	28	10-12
Poet	28*	14	14	14
Private Sec	28*	13	20	14
Beautician°	26	14	26	13
Designer-Child	26	16	01	15
Fashion Model°	26	13	27	14
Teacher-Eng	24	14	25	15
Teacher-Kind	24	14	27	14
Costume Design	23	16	16	15
Author-Child	21	13	19	14
Missionary	19	13	17	10-12
Dressmaker	17	14	11	14
Foreign Corr°	17	14	19	15
Magazine Writer	17	14	15 or	10-15
College Prof	15	14	12	16
Interpreter	15	15	18	15
Musician°	15	11	17	10-12
Physical Ther°	15	14	12	15
Teacher-Lang	15	16	16	15
Teacher-Soc St	15	15	12	16

Occupations Chosen MT Group	% MT Group (N=30)	Median Age MT Group	%Total Group (N=1188)	Median Age Total Group
Medical Tech	70*	16	14	15
Housewife°	58	8	51	6- 9
Nurse°	53*	11	28	10-12
X-ray Tech	47*	16	07	16
Dental Ass't.	37*	14	18	15
Biologist	37*	15	17	15
Chemist	33*	15	13	15
Actress°	33	8	44	6- 9
Artist°	30	12	33	10-12
Physical Ther°	27	15	12	15
Bacteriologist	27	16	11	16
Social Worker°	27	15	33	15
Occ Ther	23	14	11	16
Beautician°	23	14	26	13
Judge	23	17	06	16
Teacher-Elem°	23	10	36	13
Athletic Dir	20	15	14	14
Interior Dec°	20	12	31	15
Psychiatrist°	20	15	20	15
Stewardess°	20	15	27	14
Sci Research	20	15	08	15
Physician	17	12	12	10-12
Foreign Corr°	17	15	19	15
Mathematician	17	14	09	14
Fashion Model°	17	14	27	14
Musician°	17	12	17	10-12

° Designates 14 occupations which appear on both the SW and MT lists.
*Percentage choosing the occupation exceeds that of the other group by 20% or more.